

# THE RADFORD REVIEW



LISZT FESTIVAL ISSUE

VOL. 23

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NO. 3



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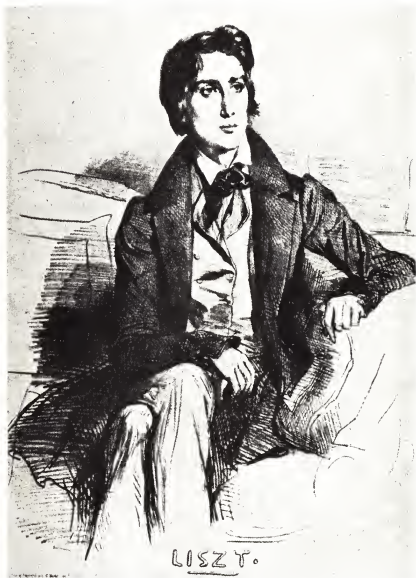
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Proceedings  
of the  
First Liszt Festival

Held at  
Radford College,  
December 1967



Franz Liszt

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# THE RADFORD REVIEW

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1967 LISZT FESTIVAL



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## INTRODUCTION

DAVID Z. KUSHNER<sup>1</sup>

The American Liszt Society, Inc.,<sup>2</sup> the brainchild of Robert Charles Lee of Seattle, Washington, was born during the spring of 1967 and made its formal public debut at the first American Liszt Festival December 15-17, 1967, at Radford College.

Through the efforts of Mr. Lee, Professor Fernando Laires of the Interlochen Arts Academy, Dr. Cecil Ewing of the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Richard Massa of the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts' Department of English, and various other dedicated persons, the Society was able to become organized and functionable early in its history. The writer served as membership secretary and program chairman for the first Festival; he was both surprised and encouraged by the interest shown in the purposes and goals of the Society and heartened by the response of the participants in the Festival, many of whom had traveled considerable distance to arrive at Radford.

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<sup>1</sup>Professor of Music, Radford College; Chairman, Board of Directors, The American Liszt Society, Inc.

<sup>2</sup>The purpose of the Society is to develop interest in the music of Franz Liszt through performance, recording, and publication (of unpublished and out-of-print material) and by providing a forum for the presentation of scholarly papers. It is hoped that, ultimately, awards and grants will be established in the areas of performance, composition, and musicology for the purpose of advancing study and travel as well as subsidization of performances and recording series. The Society will attempt to establish a Liszt Archive which would function also as a central information bureau for scholars and performers concerned with Liszt research; furthermore, the Liszt Archive and the Society itself — given sufficient support — may become part of an institute of Romantic studies.

Since the initial meeting of the American Liszt Society, local and regional festivals and concerts have taken place in various sections of the country. The second national Festival was held November 7-9, 1968, at Brigham Young University with Dr. Ralph Woodward, Professor of Music at that institution, serving as local chairman.

This edition of *The Radford Review* is devoted to papers presented at the Radford Festival. I should like to express sincere appreciation to the editor and staff of *The Radford Review* for their cooperation in this respect. For the entire membership of the American Liszt Society, I wish also to express our heartfelt gratitude to the writers of the papers presented herein.

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## SACRED CHORAL MUSIC OF FRANZ LISZT, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE LARGE CHORAL WORKS

RALPH WOODWARD\*

During the nineteenth century most composers of the first rank devoted themselves largely to secular composition, and even those who wrote large sacred works, with the exceptions of Liszt and Bruckner, can hardly be considered wholeheartedly dedicated to this manifestation of their art, significant as some of the individual works are. The Berlioz *Requiem* and *Te Deum*, overwhelming to hear, impress more from an aural standpoint than from a spiritual one, and Rossini's *Mass*, as well as Verdi's *Requiem*, have operatic overtones. This is not meant critically; the dramatic effort surrounding religious experience is altogether logical with the French and Italian composers of the time. And it must be remembered that probably no composer has suffered more criticism for his "unchurchlike" music than Mozart, although Verdi's widow, when commenting upon certain adverse comments her husband's *Requiem* had suffered, said:

They talk a lot about the more or less religious spirit of Mozart, Cherubini, and others. I say that a man like Verdi must write like Verdi: that is, according to his own feeling and interpreting of the text. The religious spirit and the way in which it is given expression must bear the stamp of its period and its author's personality. I would deny the authorship of a Mass by Verdi that was modeled on the manner of A, B, or C.<sup>1</sup>

\*Professor of Music, Brigham Young University.

<sup>1</sup>Arthur Jacobs, (ed.), *Choral Music*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1963), p. 236.

The negation of such a logical principle seems to have plagued composers ever since the time of a concerted effort toward the separation of sacred and secular forms.

But even a comment of this sort does not entirely describe Liszt as a composer of church music.

Certainly his Christianity was not free of contradiction, but except for Bruckner, with whom comparison is inevitable, Liszt alone of all the major composers of the nineteenth century kept a strong and unyielding faith (after his Parisian years of doubt), and, if repentance for him was somewhat transitory in nature, at least the better side of his dualistic character found expression in some remarkable sacred works. True, Bruckner's personal life conformed more closely to the tenets of the Church than did that of his worldly compatriot, but Bruckner, as a faithful, self-effacing believer, would never have had the temerity to introduce reformatory ideas into church music. Werner Wolff describes Bruckner as "just a great successor of great ancestors in music,"<sup>2</sup> and quotes Rudolf Louis as saying, "The man who would do this [try to reform church music] would have to pick up the threads knotted by Franz Liszt."<sup>3</sup>

That Liszt's sacred choral works are virtually unknown to a large segment of professional musicians as well as to the unschooled populace seems difficult to understand, when we consider that the composition of sacred music occupied a large part of his time after his renunciation of the concert stage. But the reasons seem to me to be based primarily upon three circumstances: (1) Liszt's monumental gifts as a pianist, which served, as he often lamented, to make the public minimize his abilities as a composer, whether of choral or instrumental music; (2) the imposition of a Catholic hierarchical limitation on nineteenth century church music which was not only antagonistic to Liszt's "innovations," but also the spirit of the Romantic era<sup>4</sup>; and (3) the flamboyance and lurid personal life of the composer, which seemed to make any serious efforts of his toward sincere religious experience and composition anachronistic.

<sup>2</sup>Werner Wolff, *Anton Bruckner*, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1942), p. 256.

<sup>3</sup>Rudolf Louis, *Anton Bruckner*, (Munich: George Mueller, 1905), p. 176.

<sup>4</sup>It is ironical that the very achievements which Liszt envisioned for church music — a purification of it by means of a synthesis of old forms and those of the best of the Romantic era — should have found nothing but antipathy in the Church, whose goals were purportedly the same.

It was one of the great tragedies of Liszt's life that his dedicated efforts to create what was in his eyes a new ideal of church music which was to include the best of the past with the best of the present was consistently rejected not only by the public but by Rome as well, but to his everlasting credit that he most of the time kept his goal in mind, however faulty it appeared in the eyes of his contemporaries. Bruckner, too, aroused antagonism among the purists of the Roman Church, and in this respect this modest genius bears close resemblance to the "Mephisto in a Cassock," as Liszt was somewhat derisively called. But Bruckner's works were at least heralded by many of his contemporaries as great music; Liszt's sacred compositions, on the other hand, remained controversial.

In 1830 he became acquainted with a sect calling themselves the St. Simonians after the name of the founder, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, Comte de Saint-Simon. At first a social-philosophical society rather than a religious-socialistic ones, the St. Simonians conceived a new order of things and envisioned changing the course of human life by various means. As Butler describes it,

The spur which goaded Saint-Simon onward and would not let him rest was the realization, vivid enough to be a revelation, that the eighteenth century with its destructive criticism had brought about an almost unparalleled state of social dissolution, and that society must be built up again with all possible speed. The time for destruction was past, the era of reconstruction was overdue. Saint-Simon set himself a creative rather than a critical task, and his disciples followed this lead. His views on the philosophy of history, on the reorganization of society, and on the part to be played by religion became the corner-stones of the Saint-Simonian system; and if the building as a whole turned out differently from anything Saint-Simon had conceived, it cannot be denied that the confused and wordy architect with his unfinished plans was responsible for the fact that there was such a building at all.<sup>5</sup>

Two points about this movement captivated Liszt: (1) that concerning the law of universal human love (which became distorted by some followers into a rather universal license concerning sensual pleasures), and (2), the conception of art and the position assigned to it and the artist in the exercise of worship and the task of mental cultivation. The keynote of society, "As the love of God to men, so is the love of

<sup>5</sup>E. M. Butler, *The Saint-Simonian Religion in Germany*, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1926), p. 10.

our neighbor the keynote of Christianity," greatly appealed to him. For the society, the basic concern of religion was to be the speediest amelioration of the lot of the poor.

That he did not join the movement whole-heartedly may be due to the appearance of Paganini on the Paris scene, or the romantic life itself, to which he became more and more attached — who knows? But the idea of the mediatory service of the artist between God and the world unquestionably had much bearing upon his future desires toward establishing an ideal church music.

But one of the most influential individuals upon the young Hungarian's life, art, and religious thinking was the Abbé Lamennais, whose liberal Catholic views had been expressed vigorously in the *Essai sur l'Indifférence en Matière de Religions*, and whose *Avenir* of 1831-2 definitely placed him in opposition to the past and in opposition to the power of the princes in the fight for Christian brotherhood and freedom.

Lamennais had great influence on Liszt; there was a bond of affinity between them, and Liszt's views of art, and particularly sacred art, which had been stimulated by the Saint-Simonians, were profoundly affected by him. Lamennais' last great work, *Esquisse d'une Philosophie*, was not published until 1840, but it is so expressive of his views of a Christian metaphysic of art, in which he seeks to reconcile heaven and earth, Christianity and the world, modern philosophy and Christian dogmatism, that I should like to quote parts of it here:

The notion of art originally includes that of creation; for creation is the outward manifestation of a pre-existing idea, a bringing it to expression in a sensible form. God whom Plato, in his deeply poetical language, calls the *Eternal Geometrician*, is also the highest artist: His work is the world.

And what, indeed, is the world other than the finite manifestation of infinite being, the eternal and sensible realization of unbodied types existing variously in their unity? Since, then, God Himself is the prototype which He produces outwardly in creating it, the Divine artist expresses Himself in His own work, incarnates Himself in it, and reveals Himself through it. His work, therefore, through which infinite being or infinite truth comes to expression within the limits essential to creation, expresses the infinitely beautiful, but in a certain measure refracted, broken, scattered by the opaque medium of the world of appearance, as the sunbeam is diverted and displaced by the prism.

Art therefore, is an expression of God; her works are an infinite manifold reflection of Him.

But since the true and the good, because they are essentially identical, have only one and the same law, it follows that this single law regulates at the same time the true, the good, and the beautiful, and finally, that the fundamental rules of art coalesce with the moral and mental laws in one and the same unity.\*

In an early article to the *Gazette*, a publication to which he contributed frequently, Liszt outlines in vehement terms his views, particularly insofar as Church music is concerned:

As formerly — nay, more so, music must recognize God and the people as its living source; must hasten from one to the other, to ennoble, to comfort, to purify man, to bless and praise God.

To attain this the creation of a new music is indispensable. This, which for the want of another term we may call *Humanitarian*. It must be devotional, strong, and drastic — uniting on a colossal scale the theatre and the church, dramatic and sacred, superb and simple, fiery and free, stormy and calm, translucent and emotional. [*Italics mine*].

Yes, banish every doubt, soon we shall hear in fields, in forests, villages, and suburbs, in the working-halls and in the towns, national, moral, political, and religious songs, tunes, and hymns, which will be composed for the people, taught to the people, and sung by the people — yes, sung by workmen day labourers, handicraftsmen, by boys and girls, by men and women of the people!

All great artists, poets, and musicians will contribute to to this popular and ever-renewed treasure of harmony. The State will appoint public rewards to such as, like ourselves, have been three times at the general assemblies, and all classes will at last melt into one religious, magnificent, and lofty unity of feelings.

This will be the *fiat lux* of art!

Come, then, thou glorious time, when art will unfold and complete itself in all its forms, soaring up to the highest perfection, and, alike a bond of fraternity, unite humanity to enchanting wonders. Appear, O time, when revelation shall no longer be to the artist that bitter and fleeting water which he can scarcely find in the unfruitful sand into which he digs. Come, O time, when it will flow like an inexhaustible, life-giving fountain. Come, O hour of deliverance, when poets and musician, forgetting the "public," will only know one motto, "The People and God!"

\*Abbe de Lamennais, *Esquisse*, Vol. III, p. 117. (No publisher indicated).

\*Lina Ramann, *Franz Liszt, Artist and Man* (London: W. H. Allen & Co. 1882), p. 141.

This effusive rhetoric, with all its high-sounding phrases, may make the reader smile, but the twenty-three year old musician, however lacking he might have been in clairvoyance, must nevertheless be credited with enthusiasm for, and dedication to a goal which he was to pursue with but slight success in the eyes of the "people" whom he cherished so highly, and which, even yet, is in great need of investigation.

It would be impossible to separate Liszt's musical ideas into those used for sacred and secular or instrumental works. He felt all music too ardently for that. The chromaticism found in his instrumental music had an equal place of importance in that dedicated to church use, as did his characteristic use of the tritone, the seventh, ninth, and even more extensive chords, and the sudden harmonic shifts. But he was nevertheless cognizant of his early love for chant and its historical successors, and even to a greater degree later in life his church music developed an austerity and simplicity along with its harmonic vigor, attesting to the particular aura he created around sacred forms.

The combination of archaicism and modernism, of the "simple and the dramatic," as he had said, of the "rich and the lucid," created sacred works of a nature incompatible with most of the pre-conceived notions of his day. Some characteristic examples of Liszt's adventurous harmonic spirit are from his late years, for instance, this excerpt from "Ossa Arida," for male voices and organ composed in 1879, in which successive thirds are superimposed to their very limits.



The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. The top system consists of a grand staff with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked 'Lento' and 'p sotto voce'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'SECONDO'. The bottom system consists of a grand staff with two piano parts. The upper piano part is marked 'PRIMO' and the lower piano part is marked 'SECONDO'. The music features complex harmonic structures, including diminished seventh and superimposed chords, as described in the text.

Two examples of the overwhelming effect Liszt achieved with his consecutive diminished seventh and superimposed chords are taken from a truly remarkable work composed in 1878, *Via Crucis*. The first is from "Station VIII (Die Frauen von Jerusalem)."

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. The top system consists of a grand staff with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked 'Organo poco a poco accel. e cresc.'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'Organo'. The bottom system consists of a grand staff with two piano parts. The upper piano part is marked 'PRIMO' and the lower piano part is marked 'SECONDO'. The music features complex harmonic structures, including diminished seventh and superimposed chords, as described in the text.

The second is from "Station XI (Jesus wird ans Kreuz geschlagen)."



Can the following excerpt from Honegger's last major work\* be considered very far removed from these examples?



He had entered the field when some new principle in music had asserted itself, somewhat vaguely in Beethoven, more definitely in Berlioz. He established the way and boldly entered upon it, although his efforts in church music did not achieve full fruition in public acceptance. Following a lukewarm reception of his *Missa Choralis* in 1870, he lamented,

\*Arthur Honegger, *Une Cantate de Noël*, (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1953).

Ah, Lord, how long? (Psalm 13) is the cry of my soul.  
 . . . My sacred music does not please the clergy, and seems  
 incongruous to the ears of the world.<sup>9</sup>

Franz Liszt's career as a church composer was launched in 1848 with his *Männerchormesse*, which was to be altered somewhat by the time of its publication by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1853, and greatly revised and improved by the composer in 1869.

The care with which the composer dealt with this first major sacred work twenty-one years after its first appeared seems to indicate not only an awareness of its earlier shortcomings but a special fondness he held for it. This is further illustrated by the following admonition to the conductor Herbeck, dated January 12, 1857, several years before the final revision:

Above all, complete security of intonation is needed, which can only be realized by rehearsal of the individual voices (chiefly the middle parts, second tenor and first bass), and then over all a religious deepening uplifting, transfiguration, transformation, illumination, animation — with an expression of Catholic devotion and inspiration. The "Credo" must resound rock-like with its dogma; the "Sanctus" must be sweet and mysterious; the "Agnus Dei" (like the "Miserere nobis" in the "Gloria") must be accented with gentle, deep melancholy, full of ardent sympathy for the Passion of Christ; and the "donna nobis pacem" quiet and reconciled, as if faith were suspended there like fragrant incense. The church composer is preacher as well as priest, and where the word alone does not suffice for the proper feeling, sound lends it wings and clarity.<sup>10</sup>

For many reasons, the *Männerchormesse* is one of Liszt's strongest and most forceful. He had a great affinity for male voices, and the cult of the 19th century "männerchor" found a real champion in him. But whereas many of his contemporaries also composed extensively for women's voices, the ratio of Liszt's output is considerably more one-sided than most. Including settings of the same work for various vocal combinations, the extant sacred compositions number twenty-five for mixed voices, twenty-one for male voices, and seven for women's voices.

While Liszt considered this Mass a preparation for his other sacred works — it inaugurated his entrance into the field of sacred composition — it is one of his most convincing and successful efforts in the medium of choral composition. It is fortunate that the 1870 revisions

<sup>9</sup>La Mara, *Liszt-Briefe*, VI, p. 250.

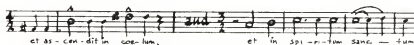
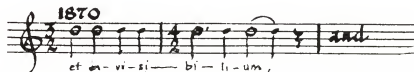
<sup>10</sup>La Mara, *Liszt-Briefe*, I, p. 261.

were made to refine and improve the earlier, somewhat tentative ideas, because considerable strengthening of the material was accomplished thereby.

A few of these changes will point up the scope and effect of the revision.



The 1853 edition still leaves some awkward spots from the standpoint of textual treatment, which are smoothed out in the later version. Note the differences in syllabic stress of the following examples:



However, there are many refinements also insofar as sonority is concerned. The new choral setting has an improved sound; for instance, in the "Gloria," instead of employing one voice as formerly, the words, "Domine Deus," "Deus Pater," "Domine Fili," and "Jesu Christe" are now assigned to three voices in unison, with the second bass part en-

tering on "Rex coelestis," "omnipotens," "Unigenite," and "Jesu Christe." In addition, many sections of the "Credo" are more colorful, with frequent alterations of rhythm, an avoidance of text-repetition, and a general tightening up of the dramatic elements. The organ accompaniment also is more of a separate entity, not only supplementing, but contrasting as well with the vocal utterances.

Finally, the musical material itself has undergone a complete transformation and renovation in the final version. In the "Christe eleison," which employs a new rhythm, the bass also is given a different motive, and the entire closing section is reworked, becoming more quiet and solemn than formerly. In the "Gloria," instead of:



we now have:



Written in a perhaps more "traditional" manner than his other Masses, the "Männerchormesse" nevertheless combines in a felicitous way fine choral writing, a keen sense of vocal sonority, dramatic insight into the possibilities the text offers, and Liszt's convictions concerning the stylistic requirements of Church music. Moreover, the work is closely-knit throughout, with the reiteration of its main themes as well as its tonal relationships contributing strongly to this. Although there is less evidence of a "transformation of themes" in the *Männerchormesse* than there is in the later sacred works, the themes nevertheless avoid monotony by their use in various vocal and instrumental settings, as well as in varied keys. The work deserves close scrutiny by conductors of male choruses seeking material which is grateful for the voices as well as aesthetically and spiritually rewarding.

The first as well as the largest of Liszt's church works with orchestral accompaniment was the *Graner Festmesse*. Even before its performance it met with opposition; the secret and powerful hostility of Prince Festetics toward the initial use of the work was evidenced by his efforts to convince the Cardinal Primate of its faults. According to Pourtales, the Prince had a work of his own to present!<sup>11</sup> The Prince, further, relegated the entire body of the "music of the future to the realm of musical nonsense."<sup>12</sup> Other men whom Liszt had considered his friends, along with the Prince, believed strongly that he had imitated Wagner in this Mass.

The lack of logic in public thinking concerning this criticism is commented upon by Chantavoine:

On the same terms as employed in the Mass, the principal themes, those of the "Kyrie," "Gloria," and "Credo," reappear later in the final scene of the *"Götterdämmerung,"* as the three themes of the Tetralogy — at the bottom of the whirlwind which swallows up the gods. It is not without reason that the Mass of Liszt and the dramas of Wagner are found similar here; by the time the Tetralogy became popular the *Messe de Gran* was no longer accepted; it baffled some and scandalized others. Later, in spite of the discrepancy of the dates, it was accused of Wagnerism, and of a Wagnerism which seemed inappropriate by transferring the theater to the church.<sup>13</sup>

The fact that others had likened the Mass, or portions of it, to the "Venusberg" music, indicates a recognition of earlier similarities between the two composers.

The contrasts between this Mass and its predecessor are significant: there is none of the uncertainty of textual setting evident in the early versions of the *Männerchormesse*, the thematic usage is much more evident throughout, and in every way it is the most extravagant of Liszt's Masses. The orchestral forces, while the same as for the later *Ungarische Kronungsmesse*, are in general used in much more individual ways, but the comparison with Wagner's synthesis of instrumental and vocal forces is evident as well as in the amalgam of resultant sound.

Some of the harmonic innovations of the *Graner Messe*, evidenced as early as the "Kyrie" are startling even to the present-day listener,

<sup>11</sup>Guy de Pourtales, *La Vie de Franz Liszt*, (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1928), p. 157.

<sup>12</sup>Peter Raabe, *Liszt's Schaffen*, (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1931), p. 150.

<sup>13</sup>Jean Chantavoine, *Liszt*, (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1927), p. 83.

and it is not surprising that to the ears of the congregation at the Cathedral dedication, as well as the ears of the emperor, the sounds seemed unusual.

The contrast between the two elements of harmonic simplicity and complexity is one of the characteristic features of the Mass, and gives it the feeling of a Twentieth Century work, such as might be composed by Stravinsky. It is not too wide a step from this example from the above-mentioned "Miserere" to the Stravinsky *Cantata* (1952):



The third of Liszt's large sacred works, the *Missa Choralis*, was composed in 1865, and published by C. F. Kahnt in 1869.

The original which exists in the Weimar Liszt Museum, is, according to Wolfrum, so full of "corrections, mistakes, crossingsout, etc.,

[there is] proof that it was not a matter of course for the Master, as it might have been with a simple mass-setting which would allow his glowing imagination to stream forth."<sup>14</sup> Such statements as this recall to mind the arduous process by which Beethoven's great works were written and re-written, and together with the information we have concerning the revisions of the *Männerchormesse*, the *Graner Festmesse*, and others of his sacred compositions, and the attention to detail everywhere evident, completely put to rout statements made by some of the composer's critics that he was a careless, slipshod worker. The copious marks of expression, interpretation, and dynamics, together with explicit instructions given not only to the performers but to the conductor as well, on occasion, attest to this. Critics may not agree with the final result, but there is no reason to believe it was due to lack of care on the part of the composer.

As with all of Liszt's larger works, while his characteristic musical ideas are always evident, his approach is different from all others of a similar nature. This Mass has much polyphony in it, and conscious sixteenth century practices are apparent. Wolfrum believes that more than any other of the sacred choral works this mass represents a true reformation of Church music,<sup>15</sup> and certainly it must be agreed that it contains some remarkable elements.

Liszt's *Coronation Mass* was conceived under the most controversial of circumstances. As early as 1865, during the time of the first performance of his *Legend of St. Elisabeth*, he had spoken with the Archbishop concerning the composition of such a work, and had begun it in 1866, but it was not until March of 1867 that, through the intervention of Baron von Augustz, the die was officially cast in Liszt's direction, and the work was completed in three weeks.

Quite unlike any other large work of Liszt, this Mass is unique in many respects. In none of the others do we find such an emphasis on austerity of style, with entire sections of unison being found. But the open intervals are contrasted in the most dramatic ways by extended chords such as those of the "Domine Deus" section. It possesses some other innovations, too. Liszt did not compose the "Credo," but inserted

<sup>14</sup>Wolfrum, *Frans Liszt's Musikalische Werke*, V, ii, quoting 1911 published letters (Czapo-Budapest).

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*



the "Credo" from a Royal Mass of Henry Du Mont (1610-1648).<sup>16</sup> In addition, the "Offertorium" and "Gradual" were added later — the "Offertorium" in 1867, and the "Gradual" two years after the first performance, on the text, "Laudate Dominum omnes gentes" (116th Psalm). And this "Offertorium," completely instrumental, is one of the most rhapsodic of nineteenth century composition, inserted in the midst of the Mass as the only Romantic element of the work.

The *Ungarische Kronungsmesse* belongs to the standard religious repertoire of Hungary, but it is not heard much elsewhere. Liszt himself did not think as highly of it as he did some of his other sacred works, as this letter to the Princess Wittgenstein, dated August 9, 1868, indicates:

Musically seen, it is a somewhat weak work. The imposed necessity of keeping the music as short as possible in order not to lengthen unduly an already long ceremony, forbade me entirely from completion of all episodes, duets, and other niceties, as they are with the great masters and their large works. For all that, I believe that the Coronation Mass is, within these narrow confines, more concentrated than crowded, and that the two keynote of patriotism and Catholic belief are maintained in it, and are harmonious from beginning to end.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever Liszt's personal views were concerning the Mass, it seems to the contemporary ear to have everything required of a work of art of this kind — variety, both in the treatment of the vocal and orchestral elements, but at the same time a synthesis of them; soaring, exalted melodies, making it a fine vehicle for the solo voices involved; a unity achieved as always by the recurrence of musical material as well as a strong relationship of keys; and above all, a sincerity of conviction in the portrayal of the text. The Mass is remarkably free from clichés, and yet the Lisztian touch is implicit in the work, with the rich harmonies and chromaticism heard from time to time, combined with the elements of Gregorian chant. The one significant omission in the work is polyphony, marking a sharp departure from the preceding Mass, the *Missa Choralis*, but its conciseness more or less precludes the use of this means of musical expression, as Liszt himself implied. Perhaps, had he more time to write it, the Mass might have suffered from

<sup>16</sup>Henry Du Mont (1610-1648) was organist at St. Paul's in Paris from 1639 until his death. He wrote five *Royal Masses* in Plainchant, and published three books of *melanges*, as well as five books of *motetes*.

<sup>17</sup>Rehberg, Paula, *Franz Liszt, die Geschichte seines Lebens, Schaffens, und Wirkens*, (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1961), p. 413.

redundancy, a failing to be evident in some of his longer works, such as *Christus* and *Die Heilige Elisabeth*, but as it stands it remains succinct and vivid, and because of its great application of the contrasting elements of unison and harmonic adventurousness, it remains unique among Liszt's sacred works, and stands alone as well in mid-century Romantic sacred compositions.

With the *Requiem* for male voices Liszt arrived at the conclusion of his large liturgical works, although from this time until the year before his death he continued to work in the realm of church music and wrote a number of shorter compositions for use in the service. Thus the two works for male voices, the *Männerchormesse* of 1848 and the *Requiem* of 1869, served as the terminals for this type of composition, within which twenty-one year period a wide variety of styles and developmental characteristics are notable, chief among them being, in the *Requiem*, the almost complete disenchantment from Gregorian idioms and the utilization of harmonic materials which were to be developed even further in his last smaller sacred works and further yet by Liszt's successors in the Twentieth Century — Debussy, Scriabin, and Stravinsky among them. Interestingly enough, there are perhaps fewer points of contrast between the two male chorus works than there are among the other sacred works due in large measure to the peculiar limitations imposed by the ranges of the voices and the acoustical properties they possess as well as the fact that the same accompaniment is used. But although chromaticism and harmonic color are perhaps more adventurous in the *Requiem*, there are not a great many real harmonic "advancements" between the two. Liszt's "development" musically might be likened to that of Stravinsky in the great variety of style employed, for the *Männerchormesse* is a work of great maturity improved, it is true, twenty-one years later, but possessing almost as great an understanding of the stylistic possibilities of the medium as that exhibited in the *Requiem*. Thus, rather than really "growing" musically, Liszt's creative powers were employed in the most varied and adventurous means always, and, as indicated throughout this study, musical characteristics to be found in Twentieth Century works were apparent everywhere in his compositions during the thirty-seven years under consideration.

In a letter to Brendel, Liszt had the following recommendation to make regarding one of his favorite works, *Psalm Thirteen*:

Were any one of my more recent works likely to be performed at a concert with orchestra and chorus, I would recommend this psalm. Its poetic subject welled up plentifully out of my soul; and besides, I feel as if the musical form did not roam about beyond a given tradition. It requires a lyrical tenor; in his song he must be able to pray, to sigh, to lament, to become exalted, pacified, and biblically inspired. Orchestra and chorus, too, have great demands made upon them. Superficial or ordinarily careful study will not suffice.<sup>18</sup>

This work is unquestionably the greatest of the psalm settings Liszt composed, and a masterpiece by any standard. The strong effect which it exerts results in large measure from the fact that here the realms of solo, chorus, and orchestra are each explored to the limit, but are welded into an impressive unity. Also, the composer has treated the instrumentation with loving care, for in none of his works does the use of the orchestra captivate the listener to a great degree. Pure sentiment is the keynote here, and Liszt has used compelling skill in making the greatest possible use of the affective forces he knew so well. In this piece the dramatic technique of the symphonic poem is applied to a religious subject in such a way as to make it an intensely moving work. Searle likens it to later settings of religious texts, such as the Verdi *Requiem*, or even the *Psalmus Hungaricus* of Kodaly rather than to conventional religious works of the time.<sup>19</sup>

In the Brendel letter quoted above, Liszt further states that it is one of the compositions which he has worked out most fully, and "contains two fugue movements and a couple of passages which were written with tears of blood."<sup>20</sup> Regarding this statement, his biographer Hunecker comments:

He had reason to write with tears of blood; he had given the world a new orchestral form, had found new paths for sacred music, had done more as a missionary for his art than any other three masters, yet contemporaneous criticism was as bitter against him as if he had been an invading Hun. "How long shall they that hate me be exalted against me?" had a meaning which could indeed be recorded only in "tears of blood." There is a pathos in this psalm that one would seek for in vain in any other sacred work since Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup>La Mara, *Briefe*, Vol. II, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup>La Mara, *Liszt-Briefe*, I, p. 261.

<sup>20</sup>Humphrey Searle, *The Music of Liszt*, (London: Williams & Norgate Ltd., 1954), p. 93.

<sup>21</sup>La Mara, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>22</sup>Hunecker, James, *Franz Liszt*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. 72.

The most significant single aspect of the entire work is the manner in which every possible use of the theme is exhausted. Liszt was not always so successful in his exploitation of a single melody, but so artful in his use of it in this case that it seems new each time it appears. Raabe likens it, in its manifold appearances, to a theme with free variations.<sup>22</sup>

"I have let myself sing in it," said Liszt regarding the tenor solo, "and poured my flesh and blood into this creation of King David's." He said, further, "The tenor part dominates everything; it penetrates and holds complete sway over the chorus and orchestra." And how personally he felt the text is shown by the fact that he took the liberty of changing the last part of scriptural reading from:

"I will sing unto the Lord because He hath dealt bountifully with me,"

to:

"I will sing, because *Thou* hath dealt bountifully with me."

Liszt wrote settings for four other psalms, the 18th, 34rd, 129th, and 137th, but the 13th must be considered his finest achievement in this vein, and certainly one of his very best works in the field of sacred music. It is a composition of great sincerity and beauty, and the skill with which its text is delineated and enhanced by the musical setting is admirable in every way. That it is rarely heard in musical performance today testifies to a gross lack of awareness of one of the most exemplary sacred choral works of the Romantic era.

Of the two large works by Liszt which are classified as "oratorios," *The Legend of St. Elizabeth* has enjoyed the greater popularity, both during and since the lifetime of its composer. It is probably due in large measure to the fact that it is shorter in length, but even so it requires approximately two hours to perform.

As one peruses this score, the strange combination of elements of which it is composed are increasingly apparent. Sections like the Storm Scene, in which the composer gave himself a free rein to depict the violence of nature, have a strong resemblance to the most trite sorts of

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<sup>22</sup>Raabe, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>23</sup>La Mara, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

melodrama. To the contemporary audience, accustomed to the subtleties of which the modern stage is capable, such a book as this would have a very difficult time, indeed of seeming unbelievable. Yet here again the enigma of Liszt is apparent, dedicated to an improvement of church music, he is capable of being, and very often is, a master of consummate good taste in the materials he presents; a far sighted genius, he exerts tremendous influence upon the most adventurous of his followers; yet in spite of these creative talents, in this work and others he is occasionally still found to be the arch-romantic, employing all the musical clichés expected by a public whose lack of musical intelligence he so often decries. It is unfortunate that the truly fine writing found in this oratorio — and there is much of it — is bound by a text which is at best sentimental and unconvincing, and that, rather than rising above it, much of the less impressive music appears to enhance the text's banality.

By far the most lengthy, and in many ways the most remarkable of Liszt's contributions, not only to church music but to the entire field of music, in his oratorio, *Christus*. Apparently not completed until 1872, he had conceived the idea of it as early as 1853, for Pourtales relates that in July of that year upon a visit to Wagner (in exile in Switzerland at the time), it was mentioned when they went to see the poet Herwegh. Following a journey across the lake at Zurich and four or five hours more by carriage, they reached the village which was his home, and the next morning all three were carried by boat to Grutli and the Chapel of William Tell. Three streams ran from the rocks there, and Liszt had set his heart upon having them all swear an oath modelled on that of the three Swiss in the story. Each drank from the cupped hand of his friend, and swore fraternity. But they had to ratify this at once by some great decision, so Liszt told Herwegh of his plan for an oratorio, *Christus* and begged him to compose the text.<sup>24</sup> As it turned out, however, after toying with the idea of using other collaborators, too, including the Princess Wittgenstein and Cornelius, Liszt prepared the text himself, using passages from the Bible, the Catholic liturgy, and some Latin hymns.

*Christus* falls into three parts, entitled "Christmas Oratorio," "After Epiphany," and "Passion and Resurrection." Unlike many such com-

<sup>24</sup>Pourtales, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

positions, this oratorio has few separate choruses: there are but fourteen headings for the entire work, but some of the sections are extremely long, and performance time is nearly three-and-a-half hours. For this reason, there are few accounts of complete productions, although from time to time reference is made to the performance of "the first part of the *Christus* oratorio," or of various other sections, such as the "Beatitudes," which was composed separately in 1853, and was the seed from which the large work grew.

The work is the composer's largest and most sustained one, and the magnum opus of his later years — it occupied most of his time from 1866 until its completion six years later.

But it is an enigma in many ways. As Raabe puts it, "Liszt has created a piece which belongs in the church but still cannot be performed in the church."<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the work he was unrelenting with himself as a composer, utilizing all the forms of expression at his command. Contrasted with single voiced psalmody is exuberantly colored orchestration; in addition to the simplicity of children's voices (in the Easter hymn), gigantic sound effects are found; homophony, fugal writing, and chromaticism as all present. It is as if "Liszt himself wants to join the lovely picture of the Three Kings and kneel before the Christ-child bearing his most priceless gifts."<sup>26</sup>

For the expert, seeking acceptable style and form in the individual sections, *Christus* may seem to be a confusing monstrosity. But this is hardly a fair appraisal. Applying the principal of the "Symphonic Poem" in all its manifestations, Liszt created a work of great profundity and sincerity in most sections. Its chief shortcoming stems from the excesses to which it goes, allowing much of the material, excellent though it may be in itself, to seem redundant by exploitation and overwork. For unless one views the piece from an objective standpoint, endeavoring to let himself be swept up by the mystical Catholic elements which pervade it, he may find himself tempted to reiterate, but in a far different ways, Liszt's cry, "How long, O Lord!"

The significance of the orchestral element throughout cannot be overestimated; it is so important as to dominate the work completely much

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<sup>25</sup>Peter Raabe, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 146.

of the time, doubtless an influence of Berlioz. One is reminded frequently of Wagner and the *Parsifal* idea, too, upon which *Christus* unquestionably had an influence.

Here, perhaps as successfully as in any of his sacred music, Liszt blended the two elements of the Gregorian and the polyphonic with the technique of the modern symphonist. Lang says:

The spirit of the medieval liturgic play is resuscitated, for over the whole there hovers a religious ecstasy that is truly Catholic and medieval without being archaic. While the lengthy orchestral interludes . . . often drift into tone-painting, and while there are sections that are almost operatic in their vivid dramaticism, such elements . . . are altogether compatible with its spirit. Catholic also is the unmistakable and unconcealed joy of life, expressed especially in the instrumental parts; far from destroying the mood, they contribute to the remarkable unity that characterizes these works. The new "Matagregorian" idiom created in *Christus* had far-reaching effects on the future of church music.<sup>27</sup>

Even to Liszt's most ardent propagandist it must be evident that *Christus* has shortcomings. There is too much of the "worldly-romantic" on the "Simon Joannis, diliges me" section of the "Foundation of the Church" chorus, and too many excesses in "Stabat Mater dolorosa," but there are many more inspired moments. Liszt unquestionably realized, with his keen awareness of public taste, the dangers inherent in the subject he chose, but his hopes for a wide acceptance of this most ambitious work must still have been high. With what sincerity he clung to the church is shown by the settings he made of the "Stabat Mater speciosa," the "Pater Noster," and the "Easter Hymn." The unison opening statement of the "Foundation of the Church," and the enraptured "Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat" vigorously testify to this devotion also. In an age marked by the paucity of worthwhile works in the oratorio genre, *Christus* laterally stands alone. But, again to quote Raabe, "He courted the love of the Church, but his wooing was tactily rejected."<sup>28</sup>

For all practical purposes, Liszt's large sacred works were completed with the addition of "Libera me" to the *Requiem* in 1871.

But *Via Crucis*, a group of short pieces for chorus and organ, written in 1878 and constituting a work of some length, deserves additional consideration.

<sup>27</sup>Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1941), p. 858.

While Liszt's hopes had become more and more dim for any official recognition of his sacred compositions by the church, yet he envisioned that someday *Via Crucis* would be employed in its service. It is perhaps just as well that he did not realize it was to be over fifty years before the work received even its first performance!<sup>28</sup>

Divided into fifteen sections, actually, including the fourteen stations of the Cross plus an introductory chorus in two parts preceding them, the work is not exclusively choral; there is, in fact, considerably more for organ alone, with the choruses of various voices — male, female, and mixed, being used in much the same manner as those of Bach in the *St. Matthew Passion* did, in fact, affect Liszt's writing of this work, inasmuch as two chorales occupy important places in the composition — "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden," from the Bach masterpiece, and "O Traurigkeit," also patterned after Bach.

*Via Crucis* must be recognized as one of Liszt's most important works, not by reason of length but because of the utilization of the composer's favorite musical devices in the most dramatic and effective manner, as well as for the harmonic innovations it contains. Also, since we know programmatically what each Station deals with, the symbolism is perhaps more obvious than in any of the other sacred works. While vocally simple, the choral writing is still highly effective, and the organ is used to carry the burden of the harmony. In view of the practicality of the work for the appropriate season, its lack of performance history seems completely unjustifiable.

Liszt's large sacred works constitute some of his most significant compositions. Although given the additional advantage of a text, the remain idyllic, other-worldly, imaginative, as do his symphonic poems, rather than graphic in their portrayal. Yet they are based firmly upon solid musical concepts, and at the time contain remarkable elements in the fields of harmony and sonority. But did they really achieve the goals set for them by the youthful idealist in 1835? Did the fervent words uttered so vehemently by the young musical giant who had the world at his feet ultimately become realized?

Obviously, the ardent composer failed in his efforts to achieve the overwhelming adherence to his "revolution" for which he wished so

<sup>28</sup>Raabe, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>29</sup>Raabe, *op. cit.*, p. 332. The first performance was given on Good Friday, 1929, in Budapest, at the Inner-city Parish Church, with Arthur Harzat conducting.



fervently. The "people" did not rally to the cause, nor did the "great artists, poets, and musicians," simply because to them the "cause" was, in the first place, not a thing of considerable moment, and without a general conviction of such need a revolution of any sort is doomed to failure. Yet, from the perspective of the mid-twentieth century, when the field of sacred music is still invaded by the most banal of musical idioms, one cannot help admiring not only the young zealot who wrote these words, but the mature and elderly composer whose adventurous search for an ideal in church music as well as in other musical forms let such an impact on the art of the years which were to follow, and resulted in sacred music of considerable significance in its own right. The following quotation from Lang refers to Liszt the composer, but Liszt the church composer is also portrayed here:

His extraordinary ability to draw a situation or a character with a few strokes often fascinates even in the weakest passages, and warmth of expression and the elementally musical qualities of his invention seldom failed him. He may become noisy, bombastic, even border on vulgarity, but he always remains essentially musical. In Liszt's garden we see many noble plants which inclement circumstances prevented from bursting into bloom, but while many of them bear no flowers, not one of them is without deep roots.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1941), p. 873.



# THE RADFORD REVIEW

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1967 LISZT FESTIVAL



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## LISZT'S INFLUENCE ON EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY PIANO MUSIC

HARRIET T. HERRING\*

The works composed by Franz Liszt between 1880 and 1886 fall into two categories: those which are Hungarian and Dance pieces, and those which are short and experimental. The pieces in the first group exhibit many of the features which are common to the earlier compositions. They are sectional in form, bravura in style and written in harmonic language commonly associated with his works.

Examination of the second group reveals a new Liszt aesthetic, and it is this group which is under observation. There are thirteen isolated pieces and one group of seven entitled *Hungarian Historical Portraits*. Most of Liszt's works bear a descriptive title of some sort, usually one which alludes to actual places or to literary inspiration. The late works are given names which are either less specific, such as "Nocturne" and "Wiegenlied," or more forbidding, such as "Die Trauer-Gondel," "Nuages gris," and "Unstern!" In the latter ones the technique of composition interprets the mood of these forbidding names. The stagnant harmonies, chromatic side-slipping of triads and the emaciated texture are devices used to reflect the titles.

Four of these late works which seem best to exemplify the use of new harmonies and textural ideas of the late period have been chosen for examination. They are: "En reve," "Nuages gris," "Die Trauer-Gondel II" and "Unstern!"

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Harmonic analysis reveals that the chords fall into two scale systems: those dominated by major and minor scales and possible altered tones, and those dictated by the whole-tone system. Composition in major or minor tonality is by far the most prevalent of Liszt's techniques.

The functional aspect of traditional harmony is almost totally lacking in these works. Tonality established by root movement in fifths is, on the whole, lacking. Root movement by thirds which results in a fluctuation between tonal centers is common. While most of this music can be analyzed in some key, not all of it progresses in the usual harmonic sense.

Often Liszt uses a chord in its various inversions as a purely sonorous or coloring device.



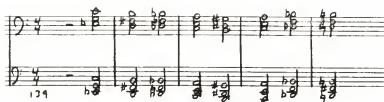
EXAMPLE 1. *Richard Wagner-Venezia*

At times there is a fluctuation between major and minor harmonies which results in an indecisive tonality.



EXAMPLE 2. *Die Trauer-Gondel II.*

There are passages in chromatic movement of like triads.

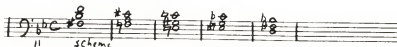
EXAMPLE 3. *Die Trauer-Gondel II.*

Another device which suspends the harmonic progression is the use of diminished triads which occur singly and in sequential repetition.

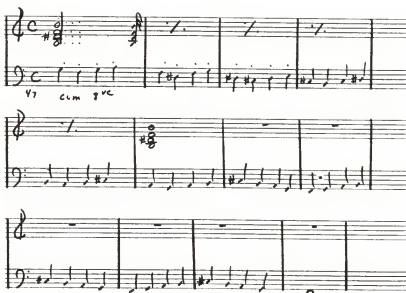
EXAMPLE 4. *Die Trauer-Gondel II.*

From the preceding examples, it may be seen that although Liszt's vocabulary of chords was within the limits of traditional harmony, his use of them was not.

Two observations cover the whole-tone system as used by Liszt. The chromatic side slipping of augmented triads occurs in "Nuages gris." This is not the same use common to the French Impressionists, for in that school the augmented triads occur on successive major-minor scale steps or successive whole steps.

EXAMPLE 5. *Nuages gris.*

In bars 47-57 of "Unstern!", sequential treatment of a four-note motif is found. The chords in the right hand of this passage are of a type generated by the whole-tone system, i.e., a combination of a major third and a whole step.

EXAMPLE 6. *Unstern!*

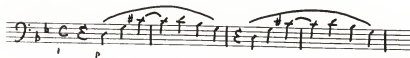
Consideration of texture in these works is governed by two things: the materials of the musical fabric and the placement of the voices. The first item can be divided into three categories: monody, homophony, and influence of the pedal points.

The use of monody occurs either as a recitative passage or as a vamp. The following two examples demonstrate a solo recitative and a passage in recitativo secco style.

EXAMPLE 7. *En reve.*

EXAMPLE 8. *Die Trauer-Gondel II.*

The next example is of the vamp variety.

EXAMPLE 9. *Nuages gris.*

In the four works under discussion, there are six passages where homophony appears. These instances are two sections of "Unstern!", two passages in "Nuages gris," about half of "Die Trauer-Gondel II" and most of "En reve." The example is from "Die Trauer-Gondel II."

EXAMPLE 10. *Die Trauer-Gondel II.*

The next consideration is the use of pedals. The types of pedals used by Liszt are of three varieties: single note or octave pedals with various embellishments, double pedals and pedal chords, and ostinatos. In totaling the number of measures in which a pedal figure occurs, it was found that some form of pedal occurs forty per cent of the time.

With the exception of "En reve," the placement is, for the most part, in the lower range of the piano. The first presentation of the most important melodic material in "Die Trauer-Gondel II" has a tessitura of one-line *f*. The material is immediately transposed down one-half step. The third appearance of the melody is the same as the first half of "Nuages gris" centers around small *g* and does not rise above one-line *e-flat*. The tremolo accompaniment is forced down into the ledger lines.

Spacing between voices is not unusual. Often the thin texture is a result of incomplete chords. As mentioned earlier, there is an abundance of octave doubling of melodies, rather than doubling in thirds or sixths. This is true when the melody appears unaccompanied and when there is an accompaniment. Since accompanimental material is frequently a tremolo octave figure, the result is still that of incomplete chords.

In the discussion of Liszt's music in *Grove's Dictionary*, Searle says, "These sombre, austere and desolate pieces look forward harmonically



to Debussy and even Bartok."<sup>1</sup> Other authors have implied that there is a relationship in harmony or some other aspect between Liszt and one of these two composers.

The comparison of Liszt's harmonic idiom with that of Debussy's seems to be an ill-drawn one. There is some use of the whole-tone system in Liszt's melodic writing. There are passages which utilize augmented triads and passages of parallel-like triads. However, the use of these techniques by Debussy was different, for the chords do not move chromatically in the Debussy compositions. The texture in the Debussy pieces also differs from that of Liszt, for the chords are frequently complete and the music does not remain in the low range of the keyboard.

A better case can be made for the architectural use of additive technique, both in vertical and horizontal organization in the music of Liszt and Debussy. "Unstern!" and "Nuages gris" are both constructed in this manner. In "Nuages gris," the opening figure continues through most of the piece. The left hand motive is a tremolo which alternates between the notes b-flat and a. Beginning at bar nine, the right hand plays a series of augmented triads which move down by half steps. At bar thirty-three the left hand combines the b-flat-a ostinato pattern of the opening section with a figure based on the chromatically moving augmented chords. The treble ascends by half steps. Clearly, this is the same principle utilized by Debussy in such works as the "La soiree dans Grenade" and the "Prelude" from *Pour le piano*.

The comparison of Bartok's music with that of Liszt yields different results. There are many techniques common to both composers. This is particularly true in the earlier Bartok piano pieces such as the "Fourteen Bagatelles" and the "Pieces for Children." In these the pedal and ostinato affects, the use of whole-tone melodies which cadence by half step, the side-slipping of chords and the use of whole-tone harmonies are similar to examples in the late Liszt works. Illustrations of vamp and recitative are numerous. There is, however, in the Bartok compositions a rhythmic vitality which sets them apart from the Liszt works.

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<sup>1</sup>Humphrey Searle, "Franz Liszt," *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Eric Blom (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1954), Vol. V, 285.

The preceding examples demonstrate that new possibilities for musical composition were being explored. Liszt's ability to handle all the techniques effectively is questionable. In his biography of Liszt, Walter Beckett has verbalized my own reaction to these works. "These last pieces . . . are disappointing as recital items. They are personal, almost intimate in style, fascinating to the student of Liszt, but rather puzzling to others."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Walter Beckett, *Liszt* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., rev. ed., 1963), 102.

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## THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF LISZT'S PEDAGOGY

ELYSE MACH\*

One of the perversities of human nature, it seems, is in its single-mindedness, a trait which seems most apparent when we discuss the contributions of great men. For example, when we think of DeVinci, we recall a great artist but forget the inventive genius of the man. When we discuss Benjamin Franklin, we remember his scientific and journalistic contributions but we seldom mention his diplomatic prowess. And in the study of today's subject, Franz Liszt, it is his virtuosity and ability as a composer that come quickly to mind. His contributions as a teacher of piano are either unknown or glossed over as insignificant by comparison.

Although there are many facets of Liszt's pedagogy, the technical aspect is of special interest because some of the techniques, especially certain finger exercises, are not widely known. In emphasizing the technical (or physical) element in his pedagogy, there should not be the implication that it is necessarily the most important. The role of technique in Liszt's teaching was that of serving the means to obtain the real goal, namely, the interpretation of music. Liszt himself stated: "May the artist of the future place the goal within and without himself, making virtuosity a means, never an end." He believed that a high degree of mechanical perfection was essential, so that the pupil could not only better control the instrument, but could be free from technical obstacles as well. Only in this way, according to Liszt, could full concentration be given to the conception and interpretation of the music.

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He further stated that "The end of mastery of style is to enable an artist to execute the most intricate and difficult composition." Nor were his exercises designed for the novice. He expected his students to come to him with a well-equipped technique, and even those artists whose technical facility was exceptional came away from his lessons with a great deal more facility and knowledge of piano technique than before.

Before turning to specific exercises, however, Liszt made four suggestions to the pupil about his general appearance at the piano. This was important to carry out the demands made by his exercises.

First of all, Liszt had the piano placed obliquely at a forty-five degree angle so that the student was facing neither the audience nor the orchestra directly. Actually the audience saw only a three-quarter profile of the pianist, but a full picture of the keyboard. In this way the audience was better able to see the pianist's performance upon the keyboard. Secondly, he directed the student to enter the stage with an air of confidence, as if he, in Liszt's own words, "didn't care a rap for the audience, as if he knew more than all of them." Thirdly, he emphasized posture at the piano. Carl Lachmund, a Liszt student, wrote that Liszt advised him to sit upright and look away from the keys because greater inspiration was likely to ensue. Another Liszt pupil, Valeric Boissier, told how he wanted her to bend the body slightly at the waistline. He was also said to have been emphatic about having the body remain as still as possible. In fact, his own playing was indicative of this principle. Fourthly, he gave specific instructions that the head should be tilted more to the back than towards the front.

Liszt was not content, however, merely to give general admonitions about the pianist's appearance. He went into detailed directions on the use of the fingers, hands, wrists, arms and shoulders. In referring to the use of the fingers, Liszt expected them to be slanted towards the key so that the fleshy part, or ball of the finger would strike the keys. He particularly advocated that the tip end or fingernail not be used under any circumstances, for the tone produced would most likely be rather dry and harsh. He maintained that the highest grade of finger dexterity could be reached only when each note was played slowly at first, always with the ball of the finger, the fingers more outstretched than round, the thumb gliding from note to note, and the hand movement from right to left. Liszt did not look upon the playing technique

as a performance consisting of two parts of five fingers each, but, as a unit of ten fingers. Apparently he was an exponent of equalization of all ten fingers so that no finger was relied on more than the other. In fact, he believed that there should be no difference of tone in the stroke of the thumb or fourth finger. He did not see why the thumb could not just as well be placed over the third, fourth, or fifth finger as under it, or simply have the thumb glide from note to note. The mastery of finger technique and its implications, then, is one of the most important elements in Liszt's pedagogy. After implementing his work with the individual finger and the single note, he turned to the playing of chords.

His advice on playing chords also forced the student to have a highly developed finger technique, especially equality of strength in all fingers. Hence his earlier insistence on single finger exercises and unity of compression on the keys by all 10 fingers. Liszt, himself well known for his beautiful chords execution, had a particular sensitivity to the different registers of the keyboard; therefore, in teaching his students the techniques of chord playing, he advised them to vary the intensity of the sounds in the chords to obtain the balance desired. At times, he instructed the student to play the alto louder than the tenor when chording because the strings of the tenor on the piano, according to Liszt, were longer, and the tone therefore louder; thus, maintained Liszt, this voice had to be subdued in order to secure a right value.

In playing melody, too, his manner was thought extraordinary by many, for the melody never seemed as piercing as that played by other notable artists of that time; yet it was quite penetrating. In most instances he believed that if the fingers were lifted high the tones could never be perfectly bound together. And so he advocated that the student allow the fingers to fall on the keys rather than to strike them. When he wanted a particular note or groups of notes emphasized, he sometimes advocated that the first finger and thumb should be drawn together to bring about this effect.

With reference to the use of the fingers in playing particular passages, Liszt gave various suggestions. For example, he noted that a special kind of brilliance could be gained with octaves, when they appear in rapid ornamental passages, by holding the fingers almost stiffly, the hand was thrown when beginning such a passage. Besides advocating the way to play octaves brilliantly, he had suggestions on

playing octaves in chromatics. He wanted the thumb kept to a straight line as much as possible while playing them, and instructed the student to use the thumb in striking the black keys. In this way there would be the least unnecessary movements of the fingers, hands, or wrists.

Liszt further specified the use of one or several fingers in the executions of glissando chromatic scales. For instance, he recommended the placement of the second finger of the right hand, nail downward, on the white key of Contra C, while playing a glissando on the white keys of the contra octave, the five finger of the left hand then striking the black keys of that same octave, thus intertwining both sets of keys in a brilliant chromatic effect throughout the seven octaves of the keyboard.

Besides development and use of the fingers, he discussed the use and position of the hands, as well. Arthur Friedheim, a famous Liszt pupil, recounted that Liszt envisioned the floating hands above the keys rather than sticking to them. Pupils of Liszt were seen playing with both the fingers and hands moving quietly. Liszt's hands when playing were said to look the same when playing *forte* or *pianissimo*. In fact, he told students to play with what he called a "dead hand."

In practicing octaves in staccato chords, or simple or diminished seventh chords, Liszt expected the hand to remain flexible always, never becoming stiff in the least way. Furthermore, in playing octaves *forte*, the pianist was to derive all strength from the hand, for the body was never to be cramped in obtaining this dynamic level. The arpeggiated octave and chromatics were to follow along these same principles. Besides using the flexible hand to execute various kinds of octaves, Liszt used the hand to emphasize the last note of a broken chord, by having the hand or hands "tear off" the chord; this kind of hand technique would produce a harp-like effect. He also recommended physical alteration of the piano bench at times to aid hand technique in certain kinds of passages. For example, in passages where there is a good deal of crossing the interlocking of hands, he recommended a higher seating position on the piano to aid in their execution.

Along with his emphasis on hand and finger technique, Liszt stressed the importance of the wrist. And so he advised that the hand fall from the wrist, for the responsibility of the wrist consisted in carrying out the movement from one note to the next in an elastic manner. Therefore, the hand not only acted in accordance with the wrist, but the

finger motion was obtained from it, as well. Especially in all quick moving scale passages, he prescribed finger movement with loose wrists and free forearms.

In addition to finger movement, hand position, and wrist action, the use of arms and shoulders also had their place in his pedagogy, for various sources indicated that his pupils were allowed to use a far higher seat than had generally been used before so that the forearm was not held horizontally, but instead sloped down towards the hand. This position was thought to have been used principally to produce an increase of force, and thus, a much greater tone.

Regarding the movement of arms and shoulders, there seems to be some controversy. One school of thought was that Liszt recommended a completely free and relaxed condition of the arm particularly of the forearm, enabling it to be used in a free, rolling, or rotation movement. Another school of thought believed that he was always opposed to rotary movement. He is said to have wanted the arm kept motionless, for through an elastic movement, the hand would fall from the wrist as it proceeded from one note to the next. In fact, Liszt was known to have had two mahogany braces attached to his piano which he pulled up next to his student's arms on occasion so that the student could not move his arms outward while playing. For execution of octave passages Liszt instructed the student to use a whole arm action with a rigid arm, but for all quick-moving scale passages he prescribed a finger movement using a loose wrist and free forearm.

Up to this point, the paper has dealt with some of the performing techniques of Liszt's pedagogy. This discussion has been necessary, as we have seen because the total purpose of his pedagogy was mastery of interpretation and he firmly believed that interpretation was achieved through mastery of technique. It is equally obvious that to achieve some degree of perfection in technique, the pianist must have material which complements the physical movements. Aware of this, Liszt set about designing exercises to help the student develop the techniques he suggested. The remainder of this paper then details more specifically those exercises written by Liszt to help his students develop their technical proficiency at the keyboard.

There are numerous etudes which Liszt wrote and are still heard on the concert stage. Not adaptable for public performance are twelve volumes called *Technical Studies*. It is believed that Liszt began setting

down these studies in 1868 and finished them in 1879. According to a letter written by Liszt to Marie La Mara, March 2, 1879, however, the technical exercises were still in need of revision and arrangement at this time, but if there were no obstacles Liszt believed that they could be ready to come out the following year. That the exercises are not mentioned in some of the most scholarly editions, such as *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* and *Encyclopedie de la Musique*, may be accounted for by the fact that the exercises were not published until after Liszt's death in 1886. Apparently they were first published by Alexander Winterberger through Schuberth Publishing Company in Leipzig, Germany, in 1886. The rights to these studies have been taken over from the Schuberth Company by Ricordi Publishing Company in Buenos Aires, South America. Volumes one through eight, with the exception of volume two, has been published by Ricordi over the period of 1954-1959.

Besides the twelve volumes of technical exercises there was, apparently, a method book that accompanied them. For instance, Saint-Saens indicated that Liszt wrote a "Method" which was entrusted to others and which mysteriously disappeared. Apparently, although there was a third part to the method, its actual whereabouts were unknown.

Besides the Winterberger edition of the *Liszt Technical Studies*, there was a revised edition published in 1901 by Martin Krause through Schuberth Company. The revised edition, however, is not as complete as the original because Krause merely took examples from each of the twelve original volumes and incorporated them into a two-volume edition. This later edition, however, is not available.

In addition to the exercises in the volumes of *Technical Studies*, Liszt as we noted earlier, devised special technical exercises for his students; for he believed that all technical difficulties could be resolved into a certain number of fundamental patterns. After appraising the style of the young Eugene d'Albert, Liszt prescribed the following arpeggio exercise to improve and facilitate his finger spread:





To provide d'Albert with ease and finish in his scale playing, Liszt gave him special exercises in scale preparation of which the following is typical:



He advised d'Albert to practice octaves not only scalewise but also in intervals of a third, because thirds offer a greater technical challenge than simple stepwise motion, and help the pianist to increase his knowledge of the scales.

R.H. (Left hand an octave lower)



Bernard Stavenhagen 1863-1914) was an accomplished pianist and for many years a close friend of Liszt. In 1895 he succeeded Liszt as court director of music at Weimar; in his own piano teaching he passed

on some of the exercises that Liszt had prescribed for him. Some of these were different from those given to d'Albert. There was, for example, an exercise that Stavenhagen regarded as the final test of scale playing. Liszt had Stavenhagen play scales using the five fingers successively throughout the course of a scale, beginning always with the thumb. The following pattern was thus practiced in various major and minor keys:



He also gave Stavenhagen a finger-stretching exercise using arpeggios, which were practiced in all keys, first in root position and then in inversions:



Liszt's students were to practice trills not only with the usual pairs of fingers, but also with the four-finger pattern 1423 — an extremely rapid fingering still used today by virtuoso pianists:



Liszt wrote out several exercises for Valerie Boissier. In order to achieve elasticity of finger action in expanded hand positions, she was to practice five-finger diminished seventh arpeggios, first with the hands separately, and then with hands together. Each arpeggio was to be played six or eight times and then transposed a semitone upward; upward through the octave and then down again in the same way. The thumb especially, was to be placed lightly on the keys.



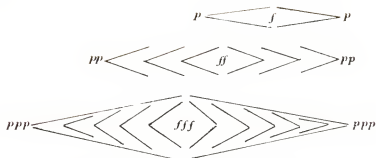
Two other versions of the same exercise were also given to Valerie:



Another of her assignments — a five-finger exercise with a skip of a third between the fourth and fifth fingers — was to be practiced with both hands through all keys, and then with the hands a third part:



Moreover, Liszt not only gave Valerie various exercises to practice, but also classified the exercises for her in four categories: scales, double notes, octaves, and tremolos. He wrote down for her a chart showing three different sets of dynamic shadings to be applied to his exercises:



and also provided detailed instructions about the practice of octaves and repeated note exercise.

Liszt classified repeated note exercises in the tremolo category, since from a technical point of view a repeated note is one-half of a trill. He set great store by the repeated note exercise, and advised students to practice it for several hours each day if possible. But he added that the student might follow the procedure he himself had used in practicing this exercise: he read a book while practicing it, to keep from becoming bored! He gave the following instructions for the repeated note exercise: four fingers should be completely at rest on the keys while one finger played repeated strokes with increasing strength, going from pianissimo to fortissimo; the finger in use must be self-sufficient, free, and lifted high so that its execution can be strong and full. The fourth and fifth fingers, being the least developed, need the most practice. Therefore he reiterated that the ball of the finger should be used in playing rather than its tip, so that there could be flexibility and a roundness in the tone.

For octave practice, he told Valerie that each octave should be repeated while running up a one-octave scale. The entire exercise should be repeated twenty, thirty, or forty times in succession, using a carefully worked out application of crescendo, from pianissimo up to the strongest forte. All playing of these octaves should be done with a wrist action without arm exertion, using a "dead hand" and tossed fingers.

Octave scales were also to be practiced from one end of the piano to the other, five to eight times through all twenty-four keys, with a good tone quality and crescendo and diminuendo shadings. Octaves were also practiced in arpeggiated and chord patterns.

The Technical Studies (and other exercises that Liszt devised to insure the technical proficiency of his students) show him as a teacher who found his pupils' weak points and made a concerned effort to overcome them. Many of the characteristics of his teaching — the insistence on a sound technical equipment, the subordination of technique to musical goals, the emphasis on the achievement of clarity through detailed analysis and systematic practice, have a modern ring, and they are in fact the characteristics of the finest piano teaching today. For Liszt was a great piano teacher, and his forty years of teaching were of enormous importance to the art of piano playing.



# THE RADFORD REVIEW

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1967 LISZT FESTIVAL



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## ELEVEN NEWLY-FOUND LETTERS FROM FRANZ LISZT

GEORG SOWA\*

Eleven previously unknown and unpublished letters have been found to add to large numbers of letters we have from Franz List. The man to whom these letters are addressed, Ludwig Nohl, did musical research during the last century and is especially well-known as a Beethoven biographer.

Ludwig Nohl was born on the 5th of December, 1831, in Iserlohn and died December 15th, 1885, in Heidelberg. He studied music under Siegfried Dehn, became private lecturer in Heidelberg, lived several years in Munich and Badenweiler, and then moved back to Heidelberg. The letters under discussion are preserved in the archives "Haus der Heimat" in his native town of Iserlohn. Actually there are twelve letters, the first of which was published by La Mara (Leipzig, 1893, vol. 2, p. 151). The last one, the 12th letter, dates back to the 30th of January, 1886, in Rome and is addressed to the son Hans Nohl on the occasion of his father's death in December of the preceeding year. All twelve letters are kept in a box marked "Ludwig Nohl" and have the designation KN-No. 1-12.

The letters addressed to Ludwig Nohl start with "Esteemed friend" and it was indeed a true friendship that linked the two men together. Without any doubt these letters are authentic. They all have a generous, good-hearted, and significant signature and a con-

\*Solingen, Federal Republic of Germany. (Although Dr. Sowa provided translation of these letters into English, it seems desirable to present them in their original language. The interested student will find no difficulty in making his own translation of the straight-forward and unidiomatic style used by Liszt. Editor).

sistent sequence in the naming of place, date, and year. The way of connecting the characters, sometimes in a loose side-by-side style where the capital letters are normally very distinct from the others, and sometimes in a smooth style, is typical of Liszt. All this is consistent from the first to the last letter. A comparison of these letters with other verified writings by Liszt shows that they have the same writer.

The paper on which they were written is fine solid "Büttenpapier," with a water mark. Some of the envelopes have also been preserved.

The first letter is from the 17th of November 1869, and was written in the Villa d'Este near Rome. The second is from the 26th of April 1870, written in Weimar; the third from the 1st of December 1870, written in the town rectory in Budapest. The fourth and fifth letters were written in Weimar, and carry an indication of their origin. The seventh was written in Rome on the 21st of October, 1873, and the eighth in Budapest on the 15th of November, 1877. Both the ninth and tenth were written in Weimar, under date of April 21, 1876, and May 10, 1873. The eleventh came again from Budapest with date of March 5, 1883, and the twelfth, as already noted, was written in Rome on the 30th of January, 1886.

Not only from the salutation but also from the content of the letters is it obvious that there must have been a true and noble friendship between the two personalities. Liszt, the ingenious artist, composer, interpreter, and admirable organizer of music-art sessions, Beethoven celebrations, and music institutes, found Ludwig Nohl to be an objective scientist and clear thinker. Both men were ardent admirers of Ludwig van Beethoven and both indulged in the art of Richard Wagner. Both were of indefatigable creativity and had a certain inner unrest.

Ludwig Nohl's brother, Max Nohl, helped to deepen and affirm this friendship. Max Nohl was a well-known and a well-traveled architect and it was he who had donated a copy of the "Diary of an Italian Journey" to Liszt. It is this booklet that Liszt mentions in letter No. 8.

Liszt was very anxious for Nohl to prepare a speech for a Beethoven celebration to be held in Weimar in May, 1870, and wrote to him in this regard on April 26th (Letter No. 2): "Please excuse the fact that I did not tell you earlier that your address will be



used several times; first at Weimar, then in the papers, and then as a booklet. Finally it will fit nicely into the third volume of Beethoven biography."

Time and again Liszt asked his friend to attend whenever important concerts and musical festivities lay ahead. In the 6th letter he invited him to Budapest for a few weeks and thanked him in advance for his presence. On the 30th of April and on the first of May two concerts were held in Düsseldorf at which, among other works, the "Graner Messe" was performed. Liszt cordially invited Nohl to attend and enclosed a ticket for the trip in the letter (No. 9). He closed with the words, "In the hope of seeing you soon — faithful and thankful."

Although Franz Liszt appreciated the critical judgment of his friend other things were also discussed, among them private affairs. Nohl very often was in financial trouble and he probably turned to his influential friend for the possibilities of giving lectures and speeches, and perhaps for help in finding secure employment.

During the Beethoven celebration in Budapest in 1870, Liszt saw to it that Nohl's speech on Beethoven was properly appreciated. The editor of a Hungarian music journal personally attended to the arrangements for this, and Nohl's arrival was announced in the journal (Letter No. 3).

Two years later Liszt concerned himself (Letter No. 4) with the proper time for publication of Nohl's research works. The two men had different ideas about the best time for the work to appear, and Nohl waited somewhat impatiently. Liszt acted thoughtfully and intelligently when he wrote the consoling words, "Before we can hang up the picture it must be approximately finished. That is your task, and then we can take care of the rest." It was always Franz Liszt who comforted and encouraged his friend, who was at times depressed. It was Liszt who gave Nohl courage for his work. "Finish your Beethoven efficiently and cheerfully," he wrote on March 13, 1873, in Letter No. 6.

Liszt was not, however, only on the giving end of this relationship, as he benefitted from it also. He was deeply appreciative for the essays on the Religious Music art which he received from Nohl. He wrote, "I thank you ever so much for your important report on the Religious Music art — I shall permit myself to hint at some

points where our opinions concerning Bach and Mendelssohn differ and we shall settle it as friends." (Letter No. 7). In spite of the admirable harmony between the two men there were obvious differences of opinion. Liszt simply wanted to "hint at" his personal ideas and to "settle it as friends." What modesty for an artist of such greatness!

Liszt regarded Nohl's research work with enthusiasm. He thought that the booklet on Wagner was "excellent." He was especially impressed with the words ". . . the fine, form, and proud attitude of the music," its "distinct physiognomy," and ". . . the spirit of love [the word love is underlined] which was created by the music." Liszt feared that he was presumptuous when he quoted the following words of his friend and thus in a certain sense made them appear his own: ". . . with the Logos, the thoughts, alone creating order and giving life to the rise and fall of the poetic idea." (Letter No. 1).

It is possible that there exist more letters from Franz Liszt to Ludwig Nohl, although research that I made in this matter was unsuccessful. All twelve letters were in the possession of the youngest son, Dr. Ernst Nohl, who was Public Health Officer in Müllheim (Baden), until 1950. After the death of Dr. Nohl, his widow gave them to the town archives at Iserlohn.

HN-Nr. 1

Liszt-Brief Nr. 1

Geehrter Freund!

Mein bester Dank für Ihren Brief sei: denselben beherzigen, und Folge leisten. Minstweilen steht fest dass wir uns, nächsten Mal, in Weimar wiedersehen, und dass Sie dort, bei der "Tonkünstlerversammlung", als würdiger Biograph Beethovens, fungieren.

Ungeachtet einer zu bescheidenen Ausserung Ihres Briefes, bin ich fest überzeugt von Ihrer besonderen Befähigung die Sache der "neueren Kunst" vollends zu erfassen und Anderen zu verständigen. Als Beweis dafür tritt neuerdings hervor alles Vortrefflich gesagte Ihrer Wagner Broschüre; wie z. B. - über "die feine, feste, stolze Haltung der Tonkunst" - deren "ausgeprägteste Physiognomie" - und jenen Geist der Liebe den sich die "Musik erschuf" und auch, wenn Sie mir, im Contrast zu Ihrer Bescheidenheit eine solche Annassung gestatten: Pag.: 63 - mit dem "Logos, den Gedanken, einzig ordnend, und den Hebungen und Senkungen der poetischen Idee das Leben gebend." - Sic vos, non! - Unzählige Störungen verhinderten mich bis heute die Beethoven-Cantate anzufangen. Nun habe ich mir endlich Ruhe verschafft: ich verbleibe den Winter über in der Villa d'Este (3 bis 4 Stunden von Rom entfernt) und will sehen meine Zeit nicht übermässig zu verlieren.

Aufrichtig dankend, und freundschaftlich  
ergeben F. Liszt

Villa d'Este 17. November 69.

KN-Nr. 2

Liszt-Brief Nr. 2

Verehrter Freund,

Unzählige Briefe und Besuche belasten meine Zeit. Entschuldigen Sie bestens Ihnen erst heute zu schreiben dass bei der Beethovenfeier, ihre Festrede unentbehrlich bleibt. Dieselbe ist im Program für den Sonntag, 29<sup>ten</sup> Mai, Morgens, angezeigt; abends kommt das Schluss Concert mit Lassens Fetouvertüre, meine Cantate und die 9<sup>te</sup> Sinfonie.

Zum Voraus danke ich Ihnen für alles Gewichtige und Glänzende was Sie uns eindringlich sagen werden. Frisch daran also, verehrter Freund, zur Arbeit; ihre Festrede hat mehrfache Verwertung; zunächst in Weimar, dann in den Heftern und als Broschüre, - und schliesslich passt sie auch vortrefflich zu dem 3<sup>ten</sup> Band der Beethoven Biographie.

Spätestens am 24<sup>ten</sup> Mai (wo die Generalproben beginnen) erwartet Sie hier,

freundschaftlich ergebenst

F. Liszt

26<sup>ten</sup> April, 70. Weimar

Riedels beide Briefe sind Ihnen wohl angekommen? Der erste war nach München adressirt.

HN-Nr. 3

Liszt-Brief Nr. 3

Verehrter Freund,

Ihrer freundlichen Absicht die Beethoven Feier mit uns in Pest zu celebriren, bitte ich Sie Folge zu leisten. Zwar kann ich Ihnen - in Bezug auf die Beeth: Biographie - keinen "sprichwörtlichen Nagnaten" garantieren; wohl aber einen günstigen Eindruck von der magyarischen Gast Freundschaft, und anderen Landes Vorzügen. Zunächst ladet Sie Freund Remenyi ein bei ihm zu wohnen. Von Seiten des Beethoven Comites ist Ihnen aufrichtige Teilnahme gesichert.

Am 14<sup>ten</sup>, 15<sup>ten</sup> Desember finden die Aufführungen von Egmont und Fidelio statt, und am 16<sup>ten</sup> das Concert.

Es wäre zweckmäßig ihre Vorlesung in derselben Woche zu halten. Die Vorkerkungen hiersu wird gerne Abranyi, Redacteur der ungarischen Musikzeitung übernehmen. Einstweilen meldet sein Blatt ihre baldige Ankunft.

Benachrichtigen Sie mich wann Sie hier eintreffen.

Freundschaftlich ergebenst F. Liszt

1. Desember 70

Pest. Stadtpfarrei.

An Fräulein von Soest besten Gruss und Dank für ihre liebenswürdige Gratulation am 22<sup>ten</sup> Oktober.

KN-Nr. 4

Liszt-Brief Nr. 4

Verehrter Freund,

Nach ~~zu~~ langer Zögerung meinerseits ~~muß~~ ich Sie nunmehr noch um einen Aufschub bitten. Dadurch ist aber mein aufrichtiger Dank für ihr freundschaftliches Wohlwollen keineswegs geschmälert noch der Erfolg ihres Vorhabens, wozu ich gerne das Meinige beitragen werde. Ob in Weimar oder anderwärts, bleibt fraglich, - um so mehr als vor kurzem eine hier öffentlich angekündigte Vorlesung über dasselbe Thema, aus besonderen Rücksichten unterblieb.

Bevor wir das "Bild" einrahmen und aufhängen, soll es ungefähr fertig sein. Dafür haben Sie zunächst zu sorgen, dann wollen wir schon das "Übrige, in schicklichster Weise ausfinden.

Wo verweilen Sie diesen Sommer? Ich bleibe hier bis Ende Juni - und werde der 9<sup>ten</sup> "Tonkünstler Versammlung" in Cassel (26-30<sup>ten</sup> Juni) beiwohnen. Im Spätsommer begeben sich entweder nach Rom oder gleich nach Ungarn.

Mit herzlich Dank

treu ergebenst

F. Liszt

30<sup>ten</sup> April 72 Weimar

Selbstverständlich ist mir ihr Besuch immer sehr angenehm, und ich bedaure nur Ihnen jetzt nicht die gewünschte "Programm" - Veranlassung bieten zu können.

KN-Nr. 5

Liszt-Brief Nr. 5

Verehrter Freund,

Wenngleich Ihnen auf dem Krankenbette, mein Beileid keinen Nutzen bringt, sage ich es von Herzen. Nehmen Sie auch meinen besten Dank für die erwähnten Aufsätze über die "religiöse Tonkunst". Falls sie in einer anderen Zeitung als die Augs: Allgemeine (worauf ich abonniert bin) erscheinen, bitte ich um Zusendung derselben.

Von der Casseler "Tonkünstler Versammlung" (Ende Juni) schicke ich Ihnen nächstens das vorläufige Programm und wünsche sehr Sie dabei nicht zu vermissen. Auf baldige Wiedersehen und beständiges Vorschreiten - selbst mit schlechten Beinen -

freundschaftlich ergebenst

F. Liszt

15<sup>ten</sup> Mai 72    Weimar

KN-Nr. 6

Liszt-Brief Nr. 6

Verehrter Freund,

Ich schreibe Ihnen heute ganz verstimmt und verdrossen über die Ohnmacht meines guten Willens. Obschon ich die hiesigen Vorlesungen sehr wünschte, und bereits eingeleitet hatte, muss ich dennoch für jetzt darauf verzichten, weil in den 2 Wochen die Sie mir hierzu bestimmten (von Mitte März bis Ende) so viele grosse und kleine Concerte sich andrängen dass ein pecuniärer Erfolg - ohne welchen beim öffentlichen Auftreten in unseren industriellen Kunstwelt die anderen Erfolge gänzlich erscheinen - nicht zu erwarten ist.

Noch gestern besprach ich die Sache mit ein paar Personen deren Meinung als massgebend gilt, und die mir zu meinem Verdruss, entschieden abrathen, Sie, Verehrter Freund, während diesen zwei nächsten Wochen einzuladen.

Künftigen Winter wollen wir uns besser einrichten und bewähren.

Am 2<sup>ten</sup> April gehe ich von hier ab, und verweile mehrere Tage in Wien bei meinem vortrefflichen Freund und Cousin Eduard Liszt, der mich nach Pressburg begleitet zur Aufführung der Graner Messe, am Oster-sonntag.

Bald darauf bin ich in Weimar zurück. Schreiben Sie mir dorthin, wie Sie den Sommer zubringen. Richtig bemerken Sie dass trotz allem Schablonen, Handwerken und Masken "eine grosse erhebende Arbeit stets ein wahres Glück im unendlichen Leben ausmacht." Vollenden Sie also tüchtig und wohlgemuth ihren Beethoven! -

Für ihre bedeutsame Abhandlung über die religiöse Tonkunst, etc. bin ich Ihnen besonders dankbar. Ein paar kleine Differenz punkt Bach und Mendelssohn betreffend - werde ich mir erlauben mündlich anzudeuten, und mit Ihnen freundschaftlich auszugleichen.\*

Ihrer Frau bitte ich meine verehrungsvollen Empfehlungen zu melden, und verbleibe Ihnen stets treu ergebenst

F. Liszt

13<sup>ten</sup> März 73

\*Die Herausgabe der einliegenden Broschüre besprechen wir in Weimar.



KN-Mr. 7

Liszt-Brief Nr. 8

Verehrter Freund,

Von dem Pester Fest erhielt ich die erste Nachricht in Weimar, Mitte September, durch die Zeitungen. Keiner meiner ungarischen Freunde sagte mir ein Wort bevor das Programm festgestellt und veröffentlicht war. Folglich konnte ich den Weg der Bescheidenheit nicht mehr einschlagen ohne kleinmütig zu erscheinen.

Übrigens sind Sie, Lieber Freund, hauptsächlich Anstifter und Mitschuldiger dieses Festes, vermöge ihres gewagten Jubiläums' Artikel, (vorigen April). Nun sage ich Ihnen herzlich Willkommen in Budapest am 8<sup>ten</sup> Nov: und Danke für ihre freundschaftliche Teilnahme. Selbstverständlich verbleiben Sie bei mir ein paar Wochen die nicht unnütz vorübergehen sollen. Die besprochenen Beethoven und Wagner Vorlesungen werden sich leicht und passend einrichten - sogleich nach dem Feste. Nächsten Samstag bin ich in Wien und am 1<sup>ten</sup> November in Pest. Besuchen Sie meinen Cousin in Wien, den ich beauftrage Ihnen etwas Reise-papier zu übergeben.

Aufrichtig dankend und ergebenst

F. Liszt

Rom, 21<sup>ten</sup> Oktober 73.

PS.: Bei der Schiller Stiftung war, unter den vorwaltenden Umständen, nicht mehr zu erreichen. Mündlich erzähle ich Ihnen genau die Sache.  
- Kommen Sie bald nach Pest.

KN-Mr. 8

Liszt-Brief Nr. 10

Verehrter Freund,

Immer verbleibe ich Ihr Schuldner. Möge sich bald eine günstige Gelegenheit zu dem gewünschten "Ausgleich" darbieten. Meine herzlichste Bereitwilligkeit mehr zu leisten als es mir bis jetzt mancherlei Umstände erlaubten, ist Ihnen gesichert.

Seit ein paar Tage hier zurückgekehrt, erhielt ich gestern das "Tagebuch einer Italischen Reise" von Max Nohl. Diese freundliche Zusendung erinnert mich an eine frühere, deren Betrag einliegend folgt.

Herzlichen Dank und Gruss,

Ihres getreu ergebensten F. Liszt

25<sup>ten</sup> November 77 - Budapest

Bis Anfangs April verhalte ich mich hier, und werde dann wieder vor Ostern in Weimar eintreffen.

Es scheint, dass einige Zeitungen mich nach Paris reisen lassen, und krank melden: beides unrichtig: ich war nur ein paar Tage ziemlich unwohl in Rom, aber ohne Nachwirkung.

KN-Nr. 9

Liszt-Brief Nr. 9

Verehrter Freund,

Ihren Brief vom 19<sup>ten</sup> März konnte ich nicht mehr in Budapest beantworten.  
In Wien verweilte ich nur 3 Tage, und kam wieder hierher, am 7<sup>ten</sup> April.

Nun lade ich Sie freundschaftlichst ein, den zwei Konzerten in Düsseldorf beizuwohnen, wo am Sonntag, 30<sup>ten</sup> April, und Montag 1<sup>ten</sup> Mai die "Graner Messe", "Prometheus Chöre" etc. etc. aufgeführt werden. Mein junger wackerer Freund Batzenberger dirigiert diese Konzerte und veranlasst mich, zu Ihren seiner Bestrebungen, in Düsseldorf vom 26<sup>ten</sup> April bis 1<sup>ten</sup> Mai, anwesend zu sein.

Auf baldiges Wiedersehen. Einliegend das kleine Reise Billet.

Getreu und dankend F. Liszt

21<sup>ten</sup> April, 76 - Weimar

Meine Adresse, vom 26<sup>ten</sup> April bis 1<sup>ten</sup> Mai: Musikdirektor Batzenberger,  
47 Friedrich-strasse-Düsseldorf

KN-Nr. 10

Liszt-Brief Nr. 7

Verehrter Freund,

Hertzlich Dank für ihre schöne Empfindung und Ausdruckweise der  
beisammen verbrachten Wochen in Wien-Pressburg. Fortsetzung  
folgt nächstens hier, gelegentlich der "Christus" Aufführung,  
wozu ich Sie freundschaftlich einlade, verlange und erwarte.  
Anbei das Programm; Wenn es Ihnen nicht unbequem fällt, bitte  
ich Sie ein paar Tage vor dem 29<sup>ten</sup> Mai einzutreffen.

Getreu ergebenst F. Liszt

10<sup>ten</sup> Mai 73, Weimar

KN-Nr. 11

List-Brief Nr. 11

Im Trauer sagt Ihnen, verehrter Freund, herzlichen Dank für  
Ihre Zeilen und Sendung.

Hoffentlich sehen wir uns wieder, nächsten Mai in Weimar,  
-orüber ich Sie, von dort aus, benachrichtigen werde.

Unwandelbar Ihnen getreu anhängig ergebenst

F. List

5ten März, 83 - Budapest

KN-Nr. 12

Liszt-Brief Nr. 12

[Addressed to Hans Nohl, following the death of his father]

Geehrter Herr,

In verehrungsvoller, dankbarer Erinnerung an Ihren Vater, L. Nohl,  
sendet Ihnen die kleine, beiliegende Gabe

freundlichst F. Liszt

30<sup>ten</sup> Januar 86 - Rom.

Melden Sie mir den Empfang dieser Zeilen / adressirt Budapest / Ungarn.

# THE RADFORD REVIEW

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1967 LISZT FESTIVAL



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## ELEMENTS OF IMPRESSIONISM AND ATONALITY IN LISZT'S LAST PIANO PIECES

PAUL A. PISK\*

The general public, even educated musicians, consider Franz Liszt's creative work as an outgrowth of his activity as piano virtuoso, conductor and experimentation with the romantic orchestra. His contribution to the form and structure of the tone poem, his brilliant piano works, are acknowledged, also his writings on music criticism and esthetics. Almost neglected, however, is his development as a composer in the last years of his life which brought him to the threshold of the music of the twentieth century. His courage in searching for new sounds and forms was not appreciated and even today the works in which he approached musical impressionism and dissolution of tonality are very little known.

Already Ferruccio Busoni, in an article in the "Revue Musicale" referred to Liszt's unusual progressive development and no lesser a contemporary composer than Bela Bartok, discussed the Liszt Problem in his lecture at the "Academy of Sciences" in Budapest in 1934. The influence of various musical styles on Liszt were shown: Chopin, Italian and Spanish folk music, historical leanings (Gregorian Chant) and mainly the gypsy music of his native Hungary. Bartok pointed out that all these sources and others too were blended in Liszt's individuality and not only absorbed but used as basis for new ideas. Liszt's pianism reached heights hitherto unknown and his harmony comprised all features of post-romanticism. In the variation and elaboration of musical

\*Professor of Music, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo. This paper was originally read at the regional festival at the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts, Chickasha, Oklahoma, in June, 1968.

form he was a pioneer. Transformation of motives, cyclic organization, especially in later works, demonstrate Liszt's ingenuity. So for Bartok. Today we find in most of Liszt's works the common vocabulary and pathos of romanticism, which sometimes bordered on triviality. But in his very last experiments he avoided clichés, and virtuoso elements and reached for the unknown. Several piano pieces from 1881 to 1885 show this trend and these will be the subject of this paper. Before discussing these works in detail, the elements which point to the future style may be enunciated. In melody it is the extensive use of chromaticism which permeates also "tonal" lines and the "gypsy" (Hungarian) scale with its two steps of augmented seconds, also the whole-tone scale which appears sporadically. Periodical structure is limited, short motives in repetition and sequence prevail as later in Debussy. Liszt also repeats whole sections literally transposed. Motivic dissolution in particles is common, as well as transformations by intervallic and rhythmic changes. Tertian harmony remains basic, but numerous altered chords often veil tonality. Augmented triads abound. In some cases functional cadences are avoided or delayed, keys are juxtaposed, a portent of the chord chains of impressionism. Tritone relations, chords with added dissonances which don't resolve contribute to the "modern" character. The use of short ostinatos and the change of successive notes into vertical chords remind us of later tone manipulations. The sound, too, is changed. We find very thin textures, even austerity and the use of single melodic lines in extreme registers, on the other hand extended tremolos in the bass. Liszt was conscious of these devices and talked of "strange oscillations" of his settings at that time.

The first piece which shows the above mentioned characteristics has the impressionistic title "Nuages gris." Written in 1881 it perfectly conveys the dark mood. It is symmetrically constructed: Two equal sections, each divided in an ostinato passage and a chordal sequence. The detailed analysis may be seen in Example 1. It should be mentioned that in spite of the use of two flats, *g* minor is never clearly reached. Even the final chord is a mixture between *g* major plus *a* and *e*. During the piece the contrast between the ostinatos (linear) and chordal parts (mostly augmented triads in chromatic sequence) provides sharp profile, the subtle variants of the second part change the sound.

The "Czardas Macabre" (1881/1882) an extended, rather wild dance begins with a series of empty fifths in chromatic sequence. It starts on



*f*#, in spite of the accidental for *d* minor. Again, this key is not emphasized at all. Later fuller chords appear, diminished seventh chords without resolutions, melodic fragments of the Hungarian scale. The texture becomes more brilliant, gliding chords in chromatic successions lead to a strong climax. The melody of the middle sections reminds of those in the Bartok folksongs. The "Czardas" closes very strong in unison octaves on *d*.

From the same year dates "Funeral Prelude and March." The prelude is built upon a basso ostinato figure, two groups of chromatic segments of three notes, separated by a third and flanked by whole tone steps. A short, rhythmic, second motive, mostly harmonized in augmented triads, is superimposed, later disappears, but the ostinato remains, *ff*, then dissolves in fragments, ending on *c*# like the following March. It is opened by a five note group of long notes, played twice which as "bell-like" ostinato dominates the whole first part of the piece. There is no real melody, but only chromatically descending chords, first in long notes, then shorter and in sharp dotted rhythm. The picture of the approaching funeral procession climaxes in "grandioso" fanfare-like chords above the ostinato in tremolo. Afterwards the material dissolves, also the bass. The piece, mainly a study in dynamics, closes *ff* on *c*#, the last note of the bells. Though two flats are indicated no definite key relation, nor cadence is noticeable.

For characterization of the gloomy or ominous Liszt prefers single bass lines and rhythmic chords. These elements are found in the "Unstern" (Evil Star), a composition similar in content to the funeral march. However, here we find the juxtaposition of an experimental (almost atonal) section and one in *b* major, probably indicating that the evil spell is broken. The piece begins with a series of unison motives ending on a diminished fifth. They are repeated and ascend chromatically. Dotted notes, later harmonized in triads again in bar groups of equal length continue to rise, ending with a bass motive, outlining the whole tone scale. A second climax begins, over a bass tremolo, in chromatic sequences of whole tone chords. The chromatic scale ends on *c*. These very sharp clashes (the augmented triad on *c* combined with the diminished seventh chord on *b*) are similar to the dissonant chord mixtures of the twentieth century. This configuration is emphasized by repetition in the lower register. The diminished seventh chord recedes chromatically. Without transition the part in *b* major begins, marked

"sostenuto, quasi organo." Soft chord groups alternate with chromatic unison passages. The chords gradually are interrupted. The last one is an  $f\sharp$  major triad with  $e$  in the bass.  $E$  is also the final note of the single bass line so that neither  $B$  nor  $f\sharp$  can be established as tonalities. Liszt's technique of repeating and transposing motive-groups chromatically is manifest throughout this whole piece.

The short and programatic piece, "Sleepless, Question and Answer" written in 1883 after a poem by Toni Rasb is subtitled "Nocturne." It is the most conservative among the late piano works. Basically developed from one short motive it consists of two parts, a fast and passionate one in a minor and a quiet, contrasting one in  $E$  major. In the first section the melody is accompanied by typical Lisztian arpeggios. In the second it is harmonized in idyllic diatonic chords repeated in sequences. The only progressive element is the final dissolution of the motive into a single line ending on  $g\sharp$ , implying  $c\sharp$  minor.

Quite different are the four pieces, connected with the person of Richard Wagner. Three of them were written in Venice in 1882, the last in 1883 at Wagner's graveside in Bayreuth. The earliest and shortest is subtitled "Richard Wagner — Venezia" and consists of two strongly contrasting sections, the first slow and brooding, the second strong and triumphant. The tonality of the beginning can hardly be ascertained. A unison bass motive, encompassing the augmented triad on  $c\sharp$  expands to the chord  $c\sharp f b\flat$  (seemingly  $Db$  major, the chords in the right hand, however, negate this key.) The whole aggregate of 10 bars is transposed one half tone higher, with slight intervallic changes and leads to a chain of chromatically ascending augmented triads, harmonizing the "Hungarian" scale; only on  $g\sharp$  a minor triad is placed. The second section is tonal and purely harmonic. Triads in triplets (fanfare-like) follow each other in the distance of thirds:  $Bb$ ,  $Db$  and  $E$  major in groups of four bars. As climax, an augmented triad on  $c\sharp$  (see beginning of the piece) is reached and trails off in a unison figure  $c\sharp b\flat$  a  $f$  (segment of Hungarian scale) into the low register. The interpretation of the piece as Wagner's suffering and glory seems not out of place.

This purely sectional piece differs from the later ones called "Funeral Gondola" I and II. In Venice funeral processions through the canals were conducted in gondolas. Liszt anticipated in these pieces Wagner's funeral which was held in 1883 in the very same way. The first work

is based upon the familiar barcarolle rhythm, faintly reminiscent of Mendelssohn's Venetian Boat songs. The construction is in bar form, two equal "stollen," this time the second transposed one whole tone lower, then a developmental "Abgesang" with the same thematic material. The detailed outline is described as example 2. The strictly motivic structure with repetitions and transposition of smaller particles and larger units is the same as in the other pieces. Special attention should be given to the austere two part writing (reminding of Stravinsky) in the first parts, also the constant low tremolos in the bass in the final section. In spite of the creation of harmonies, mostly augmented triads, the texture is very transparent.

The second piece with the same title is more extended, multi-sectional and somewhat disjunct. The relationship between the thematic material of No. 1 is noticeable in some places but in general rhythm, texture and organization is different. An extended unison introduction consists of four bars of a broken diminished seventh chord, which in the next five bars is transformed to a melodic motive by adding passing notes and segments of a chromatic scale. Only three short chords accompany this melody. The whole unit (nine bars) is heard again one half tone lower, then the motive dissolves into even smaller particles. The ensuing first main section in connection marked "canto" is based upon an eight bar melody accompanied by arpeggios. Here the similarity to the first gondola piece is obvious as the static harmonies and the revolving chromatic melody are easily recognizable. The dissolution in one line is also the same, though the intervals of the scale are slightly changed. A transposition of these complete sections follows exactly as it was in the first piece. However, a new slow chordal part, *dolcissimo dolente*, ensues. Chord groups of four bars, transposed and repeated appear often, twice interrupted by a short melody. The first section reappears, this time in octaves and accompanied by repeated eighth note chords, elaborated in sound but identical in content. Another unison section, similar to the introduction follows, also a second chordal group, this time, however, chromatically progressing. Sixth chords lead to the unison ending, a complete dissolution of the material in long note values, dying down on *g#* without any tonal reference. The whole piece seems more or less improvisatory, however, three elements, the introduction, the first main part and the chordal portion sections more than once, attempting continuity.

"At the graveside of Richard Wagner" was written in Bayreuth in 1883. It is for string quartet, ad libitum harp and piano. A second version for organ is preserved. An impressionistic mood piece, it reminds of "Venezia." Though the signature is A major (3 #) neither this tonic, nor f# minor is expressed. As many of the late pieces, it starts with an ascending unison motive, which is repeated three times with changed intervals, then dissolved. Chords over a tremolo pedal point over c# ascend in arpeggios, later in groups of four in the very high register in mediant relations A - F# - Db, later transposed B - G# - E. We think of the ethereal harmonies of Wagner's grail motive. Long single chords (c# major and c# augmented) are repeated. A descending unison line dissolves and ends on middle c. The thematic content of this essay is slight but it catches the mood of grief and reminiscence. Wagner had reminded Liszt that a motive of Excelsior was similar to his Parsifal. It really stems from the "Bells of Strasbourg" (for soloists, choir and orchestra) after Longfellow's "Golden Legend." Traces of this motive may be heard in Liszt's eulogy.

In summary it might be stated that the discussed group of piano pieces contains many germinal elements which came to fruition only decades later. Liszt, who started to compose under the tutelage and influence of Carl Czerny, ended his career as a prophet of the innovations of the twentieth century. This has been acknowledged by Rene Leibowitz, who stated in his book "The Evolution of Music" (1952), "Not few of the radical achievements of modern music (form and sound) have been caused and invented by Liszt."

